DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY F Schneider DATE 7/2/85
DECLASSIFY ☐ EXT. DATE
TO AUTH. READ N(S)
E. O. 12356 EXEMPTIONS MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☐
RELEASE DENIED ☑ in part
FA or FOI EXEMPTIONS b6
DEPARTMENT OF STATE Washington, D.C. 20520

FOIA EXEMPTION 1-6

(65)

July 8, 1981

UNCLASSIFIED

Dear Senator Mathias:

I am responding to your letter of June 3 in which you forwarded the concerns of your constituents [redacted] regarding the proposed sale of AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia and the consideration of returning of Nazi art to Germany. b6

Regarding the proposed sale of AWACS, this is primarily a defensive system. It carries no weapons. It is essentially a flying radar station, enabling a defender to detect attacking aircraft sooner than he could using solely ground-based radars. It could not be used effectively with the combat aircraft of other countries without extensive joint planning, training, and secure communications equipment which the other Arab nations do not possess. In fact, the primary reason the Saudis want AWACS is to improve their ability to defend their vulnerable oil facilities in the northeast -- a purpose which, I am sure you will agree, is in our interest as well.

Regarding the possibility of returning Nazi art to Germany, the U.S. Department of the Army currently holds approximately 6,400 pieces of German war art. The majority of these paintings are of landscapes or portraits, some of good artistic quality, but a few are of Nazi leaders, bedecked with medals. Some glorify Nazism, others portray the horror of war. Four (land-and city-scapes) were done by Hitler himself.

The FRG, representing its citizens, has asked through diplomatic channels that as many paintings be returned as possible.

The Department of State has reviewed the matter and has sent a letter to the Department of Defense expressing the position that no items should be returned which glorify Nazism or war or have anti-Semitic overtones. We have urged the Department of Defense to establish a screening procedure to identify those items which should not be returned. On the basis of this screening procedure, and if the appropriate

The Honorable
Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.,
United States Senate.

UNCLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

legislation is adopted, we could support the return of the remaining art objects in the collection to the Federal Republic of Germany.

I hope this information will be helpful to you in replying to b6

Yours sincerely,

Richard Fairbanks
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.

Drafted: NEA/ARP:MRARietti
7/2/81:x23121

Clearances: NEA/ARP:RHPelletreau
PM:DOchmanek
S/P:DRoss
H:GMartin
ACDA:EFinegold
NEA:JWTwinam
T:RAherne
EUR/CE:MPaulus

0315981030